

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed on March 19, 2004. Claims 21 and 22 have been amended. New claim 23 has been added. No new matter has been added. Claims 21-23 are now pending in this application.

Claims 21 and 22 stand rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1 and 2 of U.S. Patent No. 6,643,943, and over claims 1, 2, 6, 13, 17, 18 and 20 of U.S. Patent No. 6,430,832. Reconsideration is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

Claim 21 has been amended to recite a “substantially tubular element, coupled to the first coupling element, that bears and guides the elongate rigid element along a direction substantially parallel to the first coupling element.” This feature of the invention is described, for example, on page 4, line 8 of the specification and accompanying drawings.

Claim 21, as amended, is not obvious over any claim of U.S. Patent Nos. 6,643,943 and 6,430,832. None of the claims of said patents teach or suggest a “substantially tubular element, coupled to the first coupling element, that bears and guides the elongate rigid element along a direction substantially parallel to the first coupling element.” Thus, amended claim 21 is not obvious over any claim in said patents. Claim 22 depends from claim 21, and also is not obvious for at least the reasons claim 21 is not obvious. For at least this reason, the outstanding rejection should be withdrawn.

New claim 23 recites, *inter alia*, a “helical torsion spring arranged between said support element and said first coupling element.” This feature of the invention is described, for example, on page 3, lines 27-35 of the specification and accompanying drawings. Claim 23 depends from claim 22, is not obvious over any claim in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,643,943 and 6,430,832 for the same reasons as claims 21 and 22 are not obvious, and because the limitations of claim 23 are not obvious over any claim in said patents.

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In view of the above, claims 21-23 are in condition for allowance and notification of allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

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